

REMARKS

Applicants have amended claims 3, 4, 8-10, 13, 16, 23, 31, and 36 and canceled claims 1, 2, 5-7, 26-30, and 37. Claims 3, 4, 8-25, and 31-36 are presented for further examination.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants acknowledge Examiner's conclusion that claims 8, 16-25, and 31-36 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. §§ 102 and 103

Claims 1 and 2 were rejected as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,792,423 (Markelov). Claims 5-7, 9-14, and 26-30 were rejected as being unpatentable over Markelov. Claims 1-4 were rejected as being unpatentable over Japanese Patent No. HEI 10 [1998]-132796 (Tatsumi).

Each of claims 8, 16, 23, and 31, which were identified by the Examiner as containing allowable subject matter, have been rewritten in independent form to include all of the features of their respective base claims and any intervening claims. Each of claims 3, 4, 9-15, 17-22, 24, 25, and 32-36 now depend from one of claims 8, 16, 23, and 31 and are allowable for at least the same reasons.

Claims 1, 2, 5-7, and 26-30 have been canceled, and as such, the rejections of these claims are now moot.

CONCLUSION

It is believed that all of the pending claims have been addressed. However, the absence of a reply to a specific rejection, issue or comment does not signify agreement with or concession of that rejection, issue or comment. In addition, because the arguments made above may not be exhaustive, there may be reasons for patentability of any or all pending claims (or other claims) that have not been expressed. Finally, nothing in this paper should be construed as

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an intent to concede any issue with regard to any claim, except as specifically stated in this paper, and the amendment of any claim does not necessarily signify concession of unpatentability of the claim prior to its amendment.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, applicants respectfully submit that the application is in condition for allowance, and such action is respectfully requested at the Examiner's earliest convenience.

Please charge any additional fees, not already covered by check, or credit any overpayment, to deposit account 23-0503, referencing Attorney Docket No. W-360-02.

Respectfully submitted,

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